

Remarks for the Honorable Doris O. Matsui
Floor Consideration of FY11 CR – Amendment #325 (Blumenauer)
Wednesday, February 16, 2011

I rise to express support for Amendment 325, offered by Mr. Blumenauer, to restore funding to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and I urge my colleagues to vote in support as well.

Recently, I spoke to one of my constituents who expressed his sorrow to me at the prospect of losing public broadcasting services.

As he put it, he pays less than two dollars a year in taxes for the service, but it brightens his day every morning that he listens to his favorite public radio shows. To him, it was a simple equation of value for money.

He specifically voiced his support for National Public Radio (NPR) and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS).

NPR is a public-private membership media organization that syndicates programming for hundreds of public radio stations across the country.

Individual member stations, such as local university stations, are required to be non-commercial and educational in nature, and are not required to broadcast all NPR programming.

And despite what I have heard from my colleagues, the truth is that only about two percent of NPR funding is directly provided by the federal government, under the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which also funds PBS.

The reality is that the Corporation for Public Broadcasting receives around .0001% of the annual federal budget.

Eliminating that funding would save Americans less than half a cent a day, and in doing so, eliminate a valuable educational, cultural, and community resource.

But the value of these services are unending.

As a former board chair of my district's local PBS TV station, I can attest to the value local programming offers to my constituents.

I hear from families, seniors, and everyday commuters who use public broadcasting to get local news, to learn something new about the world, and teachers who use its educational programming in their classrooms.

Moreover, public TV and radio stations employ over 17,000 people across the country – jobs that no one can afford to lose – and especially not now.

Mr. Speaker, the number of listeners and viewers speak for themselves.

Every month, over 170 million Americans use public media, through 368 public television stations, 934 public radio stations, hundreds of online services, education services, and in-person events and activities.

Every month, over half of all Americans use public media.

Defunding public broadcasting would be a deep and misguided error, and would lose our country a great resource.

Maintaining support for public, educational, and government channels and networks is necessary to facilitate communication, and I am dedicated to ensuring that citizens have access to tools that inform, educate, and encourage interest in local activities.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes on Amendment 325, and to uphold the legacy of American public broadcasting.